

I Never  
Meant  
To Hurt  
Him . . .  
I Only  
Wanted  
Him  
To Stop  
Crying.

“  
Shaken  
Baby  
Syndrome  
is  
**no**  
**accident**  
– the  
**forces**  
used are  
huge  
and are  
**not** a  
result of  
any  
sort of  
**play** or  
mild  
roughness.  
”



STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL,  
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

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# Never Shake A Baby. **Ever:**

A Guide for Medical Practitioners  
on Recognizing Shaken Baby  
Syndrome



## Shaken Baby Syndrome – A Problem of Growing Concern

The dangers of shaking a baby are becoming more and more apparent, often with disastrous results. The sudden shaking motion causes the baby's fragile brain to slam against the skull wall often resulting in cerebral hemorrhage, contusion and edema, bleeding within the brain or tears in brain tissue. The potential outcome is generally severe brain damage or death.

As Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) is relatively new, and few states maintain accurate statistics on this problem, no one is sure just how widespread the problem really is. In fact, in at least 1/3 of all cases, evidence is found that there was previous shaking that resulted in small intracranial bleeding, but the child recovered without medical intervention. This indicates that shaking is not an isolated event.

Fortunately, more and more health care providers are recognizing the symptoms of SBS and reporting these incidents to appropriate authorities. And you can help too.

## What To Watch For

The young victims of SBS may suffer blindness, cerebral palsy or most often – death. About 75 - 90 percent of the cases have retinal hemorrhages – a symptom almost never seen with accidental head injuries.

Many shaken babies present a spectrum of neurological symptoms – signs that should alert you to a possible shaken baby:

- *Head turned to one side*
- *Unable to lift or turn head*
- *Pinpointed or dilated pupils*
- *Blood pooling in eyes*
- *Pupils unresponsive to light*
- *Semi-consciousness or lethargy*
- *Difficulty in breathing*
- *Seizures or spasms*
- *Swollen head—which may appear later*

Diagnosis of SBS can often be confirmed through MRI or CT scans.

## What To Do

If you confirm one or more of the symptoms of SBS, seek an appropriate level of medical care immediately. A physician should confirm the diagnosis of Shaken Baby Syndrome, and once confirmed, local law enforcement officials should be notified immediately.

If you see a baby with intracranial bleeding symptoms without skull fracture, chances are that baby was shaken.

Proper diagnosis is critical in implementing appropriate treatment and/or life-sustaining measures.

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Shake A  
Baby.

**Ever.**